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Reviews

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Mythcon 51: A VIRTUAL “HALFLING” MYTHCON

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Abstract

Poems by J.R.R. Tolkien. J.R.R. Tolkien. Reviewed by Glen GoodKnight.

Tolkien's Middle-Earth: A Book of 20 Postcards. Art by John Howe, Roger Garland, Alan Lee, and Ted Nasmith. Reviewed by Glen GoodKnight.

Tolkien's Dragons & Monsters: A Book of 20 Postcards. Art by Alan Lee, John Howe, Ted Nasmith, Roger Garland, Inger Edelfeldt, and Carol Emery Phenix. Reviewed by Glen GoodKnight.

Morgoth's Ring: the Later Silmarillion, Part One, The Legends of Aman. J.R.R. Tolkien; Edited by Christopher Tolkien. Reviewed by Glen GoodKnight.

Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy. David C. Downing. Reviewed by Nancy-Lou Patterson.

Poems and Stories. J.R.R. Tolkien; Illustrated by Pauline Baynes. Reviewed by Glen GoodKnight.

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Reviews

Tolkien Sings for the Lilliputians

J.R.R.Tolkien. ***Poems by J.R.R. Tolkien.*** London: HarperCollins, 1993. ISBN 0-261-10302-4.

Likely in following the new fascination in miniature books — as now seen in many bookstores — HarperCollins has produced a charming set of three tiny books inside a colorful slipcase. The slipcase measures less than 4 inches tall by 3 inches deep by 1 inch wide. Both the slipcase and Vol. I's cover feature Tolkien's own drawing of "Laketown," as colored by H.E. Riddett. The covers of Vol. II and III feature Tolkien's drawings of "The Front Gate" and "The Misty Mountains" respectively, also colored by Riddett.

When we open Volumes I & II, we find poems found in *The Hobbit*. Volume III has two poems found in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*. Poems in all three volumes and liberally interspersed with drawings and doodles, all by J.R.R. Tolkien, seen before in other books. This arrangement of poems and drawings is delightful.

This set is a great success, and one can only hope that we might see other miniature sets, perhaps featuring poems from *The Lord of the Rings* and art by some of the artists seen in the Tolkien Calendars and *Tolkien's World*.

—*Glen GoodKnight*

Snapshots of Places and Monsters

Tolkien's Middle-Earth: *A Book of 20 Postcards.* Art by John Howe, Roger Garland, Alan Lee and Ted Nasmith. London: HarperCollins, 1993.

Tolkien's Dragons & Monsters: *A Book of 20 Postcards.* Art by Alan Lee, John Howe, Ted Nasmith, Roger Garland, Inger Edelfeldt and Carol Emery Phenix. London, HaperCollins, 1993.

These two postcard books feature artwork that has appeared in past Tolkien Calendars and *Tolkien's World*. Some of them are the entire, or nearly the entire, piece of original art. Many others are cropped to fit the postcard format, focussing in on the most interesting part. I do not know how the artist may feel to see their creations adapted to fit this Procrustean format. Since we may supposedly see the original art elsewhere, it isn't as if these tear-out postcards are the only form available for art purists. The post cards are 7 by 5 inches, and each set makes a visually interesting overview of Tolkien's places and monsters as done by the above mentioned artists.

—*Glen GoodKnight*

A Thing Wholly Different

J.R.R.. Tolkien, ***Morgoth's Ring:*** *the Later Silmarillion, Part One, The Legends of Aman.* The History of Middle-earth Volume X. Edited by Christopher Tolkien. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993. ISBN 0-395-68092-1.

How many times have we heard a critic analyze a speech by say "It was as telling in what was *not* said, as much as what was said." Ever since people first read Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, they have been trying to deduce the implications and structure of the total mythology Tolkien created. Master that he is, Tolkien only gives tantalizing partial glimpses of the whole picture at any given time. Of course, his very long awaited *Silmarillion* gave a nearly complete foundation, but while it answered many questions, it also created new ones.

With this tenth volume of The History of Middle-earth, Christopher Tolkien leads us into a new third phase of his father's concept of Middle-earth *after* the writing of *The Lord of the Rings* — his recasting and adding to the mythos. If anyone might think that this history is merely a collection of variant drafts, of interest only to textual scholars, this book is an earthquake on the magnitude of 9.0! I will save the most astounding revelations for later in this review.

The book has five major sections. The first is a late "C" and "C*" version of the Ainulindalë. It envisions the world created round, and not as we are given in the published *The Silmarillion* — the flat world that becomes round at the Downfall of Númenor. This clears up a puzzlement I long have had. I recall C.S. Kilby, who visted Tolkien, describing to me the manuscript of *The Silmarillion* he read in 1965. He related that Eru presents to the Valar a vision of the world through music, and then invites them to enter into Arda. When they arrive they find the world existing only in a rudimentary state, and must work to bring the world to the state they saw in the vision. When I finally read *The Silmarillion* in 1977, the account of the creation of the world was not quite the same, and I could not understand why Kilby seemed to be mistaken in some of the details. It seems now that Kilby must have read this "C" version. This post-*Lord of the Rings* reworking of the *Silmarillion* material indicates a concern in Tolkien's mind that modern readers would not really suspend their disbelief sufficiently to accept a world

originally created flat. Speaking personally, I have no problem with an originally flat world as part of the mythology, which does not need to follow modern geology or astronomy to communicate the "truth" Tolkien felt could be communicated through "myth."

The second part is the Annals of Aman, a version of events up to the Flight of the Noldor is similar to what we have in the published *Silmarillion*. The third part, the Later *Quenta Silmarillion* is subdivided into two parts. The first of these two part concerns reworking of The Silmarillion material, but the second part, inserted as a rider in the flow of the narrative, is a series of near-essay treatments of various aspects concerning the Elves. The First of the riders concerns Finwë and Míriel, the parents of Fëanor. We then are presented a lengthy treatise on "Laws and Customs among the Eldar" which covers how elves mature differently than men, their intricate marriage (and sexual) customs, their giving of names, how elves experience death, how they go to the Halls of Waiting, how some can be reincarnated into new bodies, and elvish remarriage! The later matter is then dealt with in the story of the passing away of Míriel, and how Finwë sought to finally marry Indis, causing a great debate among the Valar, which includes the issue of the entrance of death into the undying lands. The "passing away of Míriel," and all that this entails is not given much space in the published *Silmarillion*; it seems Tolkien now saw that it was a pivotal event in the unfolding story of Arda because it shows how Morgoth had introduced evil and marring into the basic fabric of Arda, and intended to incorporate this expanded material into the projected revision. This section concludes with narratives that go from the appearance of Fëanor to the theft of the Silmarils and Morgoth's escape.

We now come to one of the most amazing parts of the entire History of Middle-earth series. This fourth part of the book is a complete piece of writing hitherto unknown called "Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth" (The Debate of Finrod and Andreth). Christopher Tolkien tells us that it belongs to the post-*LotR* period of writing, and that his father referred to it elsewhere as having "authority." It "'should be the last item in an appendix' (i.e., to *The Silmarillion*)." In other words it was intended to be the final words Tolkien would have to say about the world of Middle-earth. To summarize this lengthy 17 page conversation, laden with philosophical and theological concepts would take pages unto itself. In short, we listen as the elf Finrod speaks with Andreth, a wise woman of the Edain, the sister of the grandfather of Beren. This discussion happens early in the history of Middle-earth not long after the arrival of the Edain into Beleriand. Through the exchange we are able to compare the very different elvish and human understandings of life, death , and immortality. Andreth is bitter and withdrawn, and decries the unfairness of the briefness of man's mortal life on earth. She feels man was not originally created to be short-lived, but that death was imposed by Morgoth's malice, one of the effects of Arda Marred. "We were not made for death." "*...born to life everlasting, without any shadow of any end.*" [Italics in the text.] Finrod is amazed that Morgoth should have such terrible power:

> never even in the night have we believed that he could prevail against the Children of Eru. This one he might cozen, or that one he might corrupt; but to change the doom of a whole people of the Children, to rob them of their inheritance: if he could do this in Eru's despite, then greater and more terrible is he by far than we guessed; then all the valour of the Noldor is but presumption and folly — nay, Valinor and the Mountains of the Pelóri are builded on sand.

Andreth is very reluctant to speak of how Morgoth did this to men. Finrod refers to men as "Guests," meaning they appear and then leave the world to a destiny unknown to both elves and men. He also intuits:

> This then, I propound, was the errand of Men, not the followers, but the heirs and fulfillers of all: to heal the Marring of Arda, already foreshadowed before their devising; and to do more, as agents of the magnificence of Eru: to enlarge the Music and surpass the vision of the World!

Later Andreth replies:

> 'Alas, lord!' she said. 'What is then to be done now? For we speak as if these things are, or as if they will assuredly be. But Men have been diminished and their powers taken away. We look for no Arda Remade: darkness lies before us, into which we stare in vain. If by our aid your everlasting mansions were to be prepared, they will not be builded now.'

Finrod then challenges her if she has no hope, and she says 'we' [men] have none. He then distinguishes between Amdir "looking up" and Estel, "trust." Then secondly he says:

> is not defeated by the ways of the world, for it does not come from experience, but from our nature and first being. If we are indeed the Eruhin, the Children of the One, then he will not suffer Himself to be deprived of His own, not by any Enemy, not even by ourselves.

Andreth asks "How or when shall healing come? To what manner of being shall those we see that time be re-made? She say only those of the "Old Hope" have any guess of an answer. When Finrod asks her who are these people and what they believe, she tells him: "they say that the One will himself enter Arda, and heal Men and all the Marring from the beginning to the end." She herself doubts this, saying "How could Eru enter into the thing He has made, and than which He is beyond measure greater? Can the singer enter into his tale or the designer into his picture?" Finrod says "he is already in it, as well as outside. But indeed the "in-dwelling" and the "out-living" are not in the same mode. Andreth answers:

> so may Eru be present in Eä that proceeds from Him. But they speak of Eru Himself entering into Arda, and that is a thing wholly different. How could He the greater do

this? Would it not shatter Arda, or indeed all Eä?

In Tolkien's detailed commentary on this, he states:

...Finrod has already guessed that the redemptive function was originally specially assigned to Men, he probably proceed to the expectation that the ' coming of Eru', if it took place, would be specially and primarily concerned with Men: that is to an imaginative guess of vision that Eru would come incarnated in human form.

Tolkien is here aligning his mythology *very* closely to his faith and theological belief in the primary world. There is no hint of any of this in the published *Silmarillion*. The mind wheels to think what *The Silmarillion* would have been like if he had lived to see it finished to his satisfaction, and published in a unified whole, like unto *The Lord of the Rings* and its extensive appendices.

Later on in the notes, Christopher gives us what he describes as "a very strange speculation on God's original design for mankind.":

Men (the Followers or Second Kindred) came second, but it is guessed that in the first design of God they were destined (after tutelage) to take on the governance of all the Earth, and ultimately to become Valar, to 'enrich Heaven', *Ilúve*. But Evil (incarnate in Melekō) seduced them, and they fell.... Though all Men had 'fallen', not all remained enslaved. Some repented, rebelled against Melekō, and made friends of the Eldar, and tried to be loyal to God.

One would think this would be more than enough to give us in one volume, *but* there is more. Part Five is entitled "Myths Transformed," This section contains eleven different items, each dealing with Tolkien's rethinking and additions to his previously drafted *legendarium*.

The first item deals with Tolkien's rethinking that the previous original flat earth cosmos (becoming round at the downfall of Númenor) is really from a confused human point of view, and that the Valar really knew the world was a spherical world in space. Christopher Tolkien makes comments that indicate he saw his father creating new problems for the mythology if this view were applied.

The second item treats with moving the creation of the sun and moon much further back in time. This causes considerable readjustment to the chronology of the actions of the Valar in their treatment of the elves and of Melkor.

Items three and four deals with Varda, a dome of stars over Arda that was later removed to show the real stars of the sky, the constellations, and some linguistic roots.

Item five tells us that the Two Trees were kindled and illuminated by the light of the original light of the Sun and the Moon before these were marred by Melkor. Thus the Silmarills contain the only light from these unmarred sources.

Items six and seven deal with Melkor; his original greatness and his "nihilistic madness" to destroy Arda as he strove to take complete control of it. Tangentially Tolkien tells us that Sauron was much more calculating and efficient in his design for power than his hot-willed mentor Melkor. Sauron was more a student of people. Sauron saw the *istari* as colonizers of "defeated imperialists in Middle-earth, operating without the consent or even interest of Eru and the Valar, who he believe had lost interest in Middle-earth after the defeat of Morgoth.

We learn that Melkor irreversibly incarnated himself into Morgoth in order to control physical matter, in a way parallel that Sauron invested permanently much of his power into the One Ring. Tolkien says "The whole of Middle-earth was Morgoth's Ring," (which accounts for the title of this volume). The Valar had a terrible dilemma, since the only way to defeat Morgoth was through physical battle, but such battle might well destroy both Middle-earth of the Children of Eru (Elves and Men) who the Valar were committed to protect. Sauron's power could be destroy by destroying his One Ring, but the Valar could not destroy "Morgoth's Ring" of power, Middle-earth itself. When Morgoth was finally defeated, much of his evil, possessive and rebellious will, had already been disseminated into Arda, and was beyond his personal control. Morgoth's evil bodiless spirit out in the void will seek over time to reconsolidate itself, so that (we know form other sources) he will attack again at the end of Time.

Tolkien tell us that Manwë would know that with the coming Dominion of Men, the making of history would bed done by them, and that "for their struggle with Evil special arrangements had been made!" Here, as in other places, the terms "Arda Marred" and "Arda Healed" are spoke of as fundamental underlying concepts. "Arda Healed" is both within Time, after the last traces of Morgoth influence have been purged, and also beyond time, as "a state of redress and bliss beyond the 'circles of the world.'

Item eight, nine and ten deal primarily with the Orcs. Tolkien struggles with the issue of whether or not orcs have rational souls, and if they are capable of repentance. We are presented with conflicting accounts, including the idea that orcs were originally human! It seems that while Morgoth originated the orcs as a blasphemous mockery of the Children of Eru, it was Sauron who was mainly responsible in shaping them into the military servants they became. Much of Morgoth's dissipating power was concentrated into holding control over the orcs, and which more than anything else weakened him to the point he could be defeated.

The eleventh and last item deals with Aman, (the Undying Lands). Christopher Tolkien tells us that while separate from *Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth*, it originally was meant to lead into the *Athrabeth*. This item begins with how time flows for the Valar. The Eldar in Aman were blissful, because "it did not have the shadow of death soon to come." In Middle-earth the Eldar saw only constant flux, both in the shape of the lands and in the living creatures. Elves in Middle-earth would after many ages begin to fade as the spirit (*fëa*) would slowly consume the physical body

(*hröar*) until nothing physical was left. But in Aman this fading did not happen.

The next part deals with "Aman and Mortal Men," and explains that Eru had forbidden the Valar to admit humans in Aman. The Valar could not change the inherent characteristic of the Children, and it was to the Human Children their "doom to die." Humans in Aman would eventually be at war within themselves. Their spirits would by nature want to leave the world and their bodies would want to live indefinitely in Aman. Either the spirit would break loose and leave the "witless" immortal body behind, an ugly mockery of man, a work of Melkor, in Aman, or the spirit would be imprisoned with the body in unhappy torment. This volume concludes with the statement that if Men were allowed to live in Aman, "that death itself, either in agony or horror, would with Men enter into Aman itself."

The importance of this book to the entire understanding of Tolkien's *ourve* and his own thinking about it cannot be ignored or downplayed. To my understanding, there are two more volumes planned for the series after this book. Christopher has mentioned some of the material we might see. If the coming volumes are only one-third as fascinating and earth-shaking as this one, I count the days to see them. This makes me speculate what would have been the shape and form of *The Silmarillion* is Tolkien had finished it in his life time and to his satisfaction. While I doubt that any of us will know what J.R.R. Tolkien envisioned in his own mind in its totality, I take this opportunity to laud again the magnificient effort of Christopher Tolkien to bring us this amazing, enlightening and inspiring material which expands our knowledge geometrically.

— Glen GoodKnight

Lewis' Lewis

David C. Downing. *Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy.* Amhurst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992, 186 pp. ISBN O-87023-774-8.

Certainly the best study ever of the "Ransom Trilogy," C.S. Lewis' breathtaking novel sequence, *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), *Perelandra* (1943), and *That Hideous Strength* (1945) — and arguably one of the bst books ever written about C.S. Lewis — this splendid work presents a solidly balanced, insightful, and deeply convincing analysis of Lewis' methods and meanings. Here is a critic who takes Lewis seriously, neither as an icon nor as a target, but as an individual human being of his time, and of his life experience, whose power extends, as does that of all writers whose work have become classic, beyond that time and that life, and continues to move and to delight.

Downing's method is simple, accurate, and effective, but it could not have accomplished except by a scholar who is also, like Lewis, a genuine reader, familiar with the broad canon of Western literature: Dante, Spenser, de Lorris, de Meung, Swift, Blake, Morris, Chesterton, MacDonald, Tolkien, Lindsay, Williams, as well as Wells, Stapledon, Shaw, and Haldane. Lewis read these works, wrote about them in his letters and in his scholarship, and used them unabashedly as models and sources to be honored by emulation or opposed by correction, sometimes serious, sometimes comic. Lewis' works is allusive and inclusive from his heights to his depths, layer upon layer as high or as low as you go; he *never* threw away a single word. His writing with its crisp, potent, elegant, deceptively simple voice, harvests and marshals the lifetime reading of one of the West's best scholars, and weaves it anew into works that are themselves a part of that long and still powerful body of discourse.

Most of all, Downing takes Lewis seriously as a human being, as one who had been a child, a boy, a young man, an adult, an atheist, a seeker, a convert, and a convicted Christian. He composes for Lewis the beginnings of a reader's lexicon:

> *Surprised by Joy* illuminates the master motifs of the Ransom stories... And as seen in terms such as *nurse, boy,* and *moonlight,* it also aids in interpreting recurring images in the trilogy by giving readers a more exact sense of their emotional associations for Lewis. (p. 33)

In this treatment, the first chapter becomes not merely the required rehearsal of an author's biography, but a genuine key to major elements, symbols, and ideas in Lewis' books. Each of the six succeedings chapters treats all three of the novels in terms of a particular aspect. Chapter two discusses the trilogy's "Christian Vision" (accurately and with a precise understanding of Lewis' specific interpretations of orthodox Western Christianity). Chapter three shows exactly how "Elements of Classicism and Medievalism" form the milieu of delight in the three books. Chapter four considers the characters whom Lewis used to embody evil, for Devine and Weston through the denizens of the N.I.C.E. Chapter five discusses the "Spiritual Pilgrimage" of Lewis himself (he was, after all, a character, named "Lewis," in each of the novels), and of his invented characters, Ransom, Mark, and significantly, Jane. Chapter six touches upon other "Models, Influences, and Echoes," particularly from writers and ideas contemporary with Lewis himself. Finally, the seventh chapter suceeds in "Assessing the Trilogy," with due attention to Lewis' alleged "attack on science," mysogyny, and inclusion of violence, concluding with a survey of excellences.

There are, tellingly, "the sense of actuality Lewis creates," "Lewis's evocative prose," Lewis's intellectual energy and broad systhesis of ideas," (p. 154) his "rare mythic quality," and finally, his "vision." (p. 155) Downing conlcudes that while "Lewis's worldview rested upon a complex foundation of philosophy, theology, cultural history, and personal experience,... larger than all of this is a consistent vision," (p. 156) a vision which this excellent study shpares and effectively sets forth. Most highly recommended!

— Nancy-Lou Patterson

[I think it is appropriate to say that Planets in Peril *was chosen as the recipient of the Mythopoeic Scholar Award for Inklings Studies in 1993, and that I strongly agree with that choice. — the Editor]*

Major Minors

J.R.R. Tolkien. ***Poems and Stories.*** **Illustrated by Pauline Baynes.** New York: Houghton Mifflin, 343 pp.1994. ISBN 0-395-68999-6.

This one volume hardbound book contains the following so-called "minor" works: *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, "The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm's Son," "On Fairy-Stories," "Leaf by Niggle," *Farmer Giles of Ham*, and *Smith of Wootton Major*

Tolkien collectors will recognize that this a second appearance of a book published in 1980. Those who are newer readers, and had missed the 1980 edition, should delight in the wonderful illustrations that were specially drawn for this special edition by the incomparable Pauline Baynes.

We should give a brief history of the book and its related volumes. Shortly after the unauthorized Ace paperback editions of *The Lord of the Rings* and the "authorized" Ballantine response to it in 1965, in 1968 George Allen and Unwin (then Tolkien's British publishers) released a one volume paperback edition, with covers specially done by Pauline Baynes. One year later, Allen & Unwin released a deluxe slim one Volume edition on India (Bible) paper. This was an extremely handsome book, with a Tolkien drawn device stamped on the cover in gold, silver and green. The spine was also stamped with gold lettering and lines (there was no dustjacket).

This deluxe edition of *The Lord of the Rings* saw the appearance of a sister matching volume of *The Hobbit* in 1976. It had a Tolkien drawn dragon stamped on the cover in gold, silver and red. The Spine had matching lettering and lines to the deluxe *The Lord of the Rings*.

Then a third and final matching volume appeared in 1980. This was *Poems and Stories*, with a Tolkien drawn tree stamped on the cover in gold and green, and with the matching pagination and illustrations as the current edition. There are differences between the 1980 and 1994 editions: first is the cover and spine. Instead of black cloth, we have a dark blue cover paper texturized to appear as cloth, as are nearly all books bound currently. There is no stamped design on the cover, instead we have a dustjacket of the thundering Oliphaunt as seen (yet again — why not, it is one of his best) in Alan Lee's illustrated edition of *The Lord of the Rings* and in the *1993 Tolkien Calendar*.

It is when we open the book that we find the biggest disappointment when we contrast the two volumes. First, the paper is very different; it is light and porous, as is the 1980 edition's paper thicker and smooth. But, alas the greatest regret is that of Pauline Bayne's illustrations. In the 1980 edition there were two colors: black and orange. When the orange was printed over the black or grey, we were given brown. This two-color effect is gone in the 1994 edition, and we have only black or grey. I count at least twenty specially drawn illustrations by Pauline Baynes done for this special volume beyond what she had previously done for the original *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *Smith of Wootton Major*, and *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*. The reproduction of the drawings, especially those of the greytone illustrations are faint and many appear out of focus (see pp.17, 30, 40, 244, 311, 314, 319 & 323). Some times the pictures are too dark (see pp. 35, 43 & 199). It looks as if detail, and attention to detail, has been lost when the illustrations were reshot in monochrome for this edition.

Despite these regrets, a new generation of readers are presented in one volume with some of Tolkien's richest and most rewarding literary treasures not directly related to his Middle-earth *Lengendarium* (*The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Silmarillion*, etc.).

— Glen GoodKnight

Iceland and the Shire

William Ian Miller, ***Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland.*** The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1990. 407+xii pp. ISBN 0-226-52679-8.

In 1991, I presented a paper at the Mythopoeic Conference on "Law and Institutions in the Shire," in the course of which I briefly noted resemblances between the Shire and ancient Iceland (printed in *Mythlore* 70, pp. 4-8, Autumn 1992). Regrettably, I had not then discovered this book, a comprehensive examination of Icelandic law and custom that brings them as richly to life as Tolkien did the cultures and peoples of Middle-earth. There is detail enough here to furnish matter for a far richer comparison and tracing of influences.

Miller approaches his subject as a legal historian. From his perspective, Iceland is something of an anomaly: a society with an elaborate system of legal rules and procedures, but with only the most minimal state apparatus to institute them or enforce them. Indeed, Miller describes Iceland before the Norwegian takeover as lacking a coercive state entirely; I think this may not state the point entirely accurately — Iceland's male heads of household, especially the wealthy one, had some sense of collective will and some power to impose it on the rest of society (women, children, slaves, the poor, and foreigners) — but at least there was no differentiated organization with special personnel set apart form Society as a whole. This was an anomaly in the Middle Ages, when everybody else had a king — as anomalous as Israel under the judges, or the Shire in Middle-earth. It remains an anomaly today, when most legal philosophers simple define law as commands of a state and identify it in practice with legislative enactments.

To make sense of the anomaly, Miller turns to two sets of documents from Iceland's rich literature. One is the

legal codes themselves. The other is the sagas, a body of narrative, most of which we would now place under the heading of historical fiction — but written with great care for accuracy about places and genealogies and other matters important to the original audience. Legal questions make up a large part of the explicit text of the sagas, and, as Miller shows, also must be taken into account to understand most of the rest of the narrative in anything like the way ancient Icelandic readers did.

In a certain sense, the sagas are akin to twentieth century murder mysteries: full of violent acts and tough, self-contained characters, but also vitally concerned with how the law will view those characters' actions and how they can manipulate the law in their own favor. This kind of fiction is in some ways a risky source, as Miller acknowledges. For one thing, it likely overstates the extent of violence in Icelandic life at least as much as Dashiell Hammet or Sara Paretsky overstates that of American life. But if it is not a useful body of statistical evidence, it brings the basic assumptions on which people acted to life.

The law codes themselves are not presented in as much detail as I hoped for — my only major disappointment in the book. Such excerpts as Miller gives us are amazingly detailed in their effort to anticipate possible problems and offer solutions for them; one gets the impression that at least some Icelanders sat around during their long winter nights inventing hypothetical legal cases for each other, and then wrote everything down. For example, when Iceland turned from memorized oral codes to written law — not long before the end of the independent commonwealth — they specified exactly which lawbooks in whose possession were to be consulted, and what was to be done in various cases of disagreement, in five different stages. Of course, some of his material may have been just as fictitious as the sagas, in prescribing solutions that might never be applied to problems that might never occur. But this kind of intellectual speculation it itself a datum of some importance, for many societies have little or none of it.

Miller's focal concern lies where these two bodies of writing intersect: in the actual occurrence of conflict, violent or not, and in the ways it was resolved, from blood feud through arbitration through formal legal process. (Curiously, the law was much less hostile to blood feuds than it was to arbitration outside the court system.) All these conflicts were shaped by a constant struggle for honor; Icelanders lived for the esteem of others, and were sometimes trapped by it. These were people for whom courage and independence was their crown. Everything about their society, whether admirable or hideous, is shaped by this.

Anyone who wants to understood Tolkien's writing can profit from a look at this book. It isn't simply the wealth of detail that finds echoes in Middle-earth, but the fact that Tolkien spent much of his adult life studying this same literature and it was a major influence on, for example, his conception of heroism. Beyond that, those who have gone on the to read the sagas for themselves will find it an invaluable source of context for their reading. Finally, those who find interest in legal history or cultural anthropology — who want not merely to enjoy the exotic color of alien societies but to know how they really worked — will find the Iceland portrayed here a case worth studying. I have argued that Tolkien had this interest in great measure, and I believe that had he lived to read this book he would have delighted in it.

— William H. Stoddard

Less As More

Joe R. Christopher, ***A Private Celebration of Dorothy L. Sayers' Centenary.*** Stephenville, Texas: The Carrollian Press, 1993, 19 pp.

As a wonderful example of synchronicity, I received this delightful chapbook on the last day of 1993, the Centenary year of Dorothy L. Sayers' birth. It is one of 35 copies, and, by an extra dispensation of grace, my copy is No. 1. For many years now, Professor Christopher has prepared and distributed his series of witty, whimsical, and deliciously personal chapbooks at the Christmas season, and this one indeed puts a tiny but joyous crown on the Sayers Centenary. I'm reviewing it because it deserves to be included in the canon of writing on Miss Sayers, not only as the *jeu d'esprit* of a Sayers scholar but as a document of genuine interest to a future researcher.

Its nutshell format contains the following succinct but nourishing kernels. First is "An Incomplete Survey of Lord Peter's Career," comprised of two limericks (thanks to Miss Sayers', and, consequently, to Miss Meteyard's delight in the form recorded in *Murder Must Advertise*), entitled "The Naked Body in the Bathtub," and "The Bompstable Cat with Crimson Whiskers." Second is a poem in heroic couplets — including one couplet that rhymes "faith" with "Holy Wraith" — entitled "The Doyle Syndrome," about the temptation of writers to kill of their characters. Third is a pair of clerihews under the title "Courtship," and fourth is a rondeau entitled "A Celebration of Tasker Hepplewater's *Mock Turtle* 1935." Just to demonstrate the mood of these works, I point out (graciously enabled to do so by the author's thoughtful inclusion of an epigram from *Gaudy Night*), that *Mock Turtle* was the "Book of the Moment" selection for 1935, and was the subject of discussion at "a literary cocktail party" attended by Harriet Vane.

The second section, "A Sayers Triptych," contains three potent sonnets, entitled "Dorothy L. Sayers at Thirty-One," Dorothy L. Sayers at Thirty-Six," and "Dorothy L. Sayers at Fifty." The sonnets are not only clever as regards their scholarship and poetic technique but poignant commentaries upon Miss Sayers' private life.

Last, but not in the least *least*, are the "Bibliographic Notes." Bibliography in the hands of Joe R. Christopher is

more fun to read than most other writers' fiction, and this sampling is no exception. All the poems are listed and annotated — that's how I knew their poetic classifications — and their past and future publications are documented. Following this is an imposing list of "Essays and Notes" published by Dr. Christopher in *The Mystery Fancier*, *The Sayers Review*, *The Armchair Detective*, *Mythlore* and *Mythprint* between 1976 and 1993, along with an "unpublished paper" read before the Mythopoeic Society in 12974, compromising some 14 works in all. A Checklist follows, of "Annotated Checklists," eight of them, published in *The Lewis Legacy*, Margaret Hannay's As Her Whimsey Took Her (197(), Unicorn, The SAyers Review, and The Mystery Fancier. Finally, as "Reviews," the author's reviews of some 25 volumes of Sayers and Sayersiana are listed, having been published in *Choice*, *Mythlore*, *The Armchair Detective*, *The Sayers Review*, and *Mythprint*.

Obviously, this chapbook serves not only as A Private Celebration of Dorothy L. Sayers Centenary but as a private celebration of Joe. R. Christopher's scholarship, poetic skills, wit, and gift of friendship, all traits of a scholar, poet, wit, and friend, Miss Sayers herself, whose achievements are worthily and appropriately celebrated here.

— *Nancy-Lou Patterson*

And Now the Movie

Shadowlands. Screen play by William Nicholson, based on his stage play. A Richard Attenborough Film, starring Anthony Hopkins as C.S. Lewis and Debra Winger as Joy Davidman.

I went to see this film on January 16th, the night before the major earthquake in Southern California. The following is more a collection of passing thoughts than a review, based on notes I took during the film, along with a summary.

We are given magnificent scenes of real places in Oxford, including Magdalen College and the Sheldonian Theatre. Having been most recently in Oxford in August of 1992 for the Tolkien Centenary, I appreciated the use of real places in the film. The long distance shots of the city were done very beautifully.

Joy didn't know what Jack looked like at their first meeting, even though Lewis was on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1948, and his picture had, I believe been published in other places.

The real bird and baby tavern shield was in background of interior shot of a pub, which was not the real pub. The name was not given (see legal considerations below).

Christopher Reilly, the unreal scoffer, was at what seemed to be meant as meetings of the Inklings, while they were never identified as such. These people did not correspond at all to the real Inklings, and seemed to be meant as a representative an amalgam of his friends. Lewis would not have had a close friend like Christopher Reilly, who could only scoff and make light of Lewis, his beliefs and his interests. This strawman personifies the general hostility towards Lewis by the academic community in Oxford, and is structurally inserted into Lewis' friends to give voice to this underlying negative attitude.

The Kilns never had a housekeeper named Mrs. Young. The closest thing were the Millers. Where as Paxford is the name given as the actor playing the gardener. Why this difference? Well Paxford has been dead a number of years, while the Millers are still alive. I think the only living people included in the films are those who gave their (legal) permission for inclusion

Lewis is shown as basically giving the same public speech at three different times — as if he had a stock speech, a thing I do not think he did. He was original enough to compose different material for different audiences. (See *The Weight of Glory*.)

Joy thought Jack constructed his life so no one could touch him. We see between the line that she was pursuing him, which in fact she was, but the film soft pedals this particular point.

The real Kilns are not in the movie. This may be because it is currently not up to shape for a filming. The people involved with refurbishing the Kilns were advisors to the film. As if to satirize the Lindskoog-Hooper controversy, who see a bonfire at the Kilns!

Joy Davidman had two children: David L. Gresham and Douglas H. Gresham. Why is there only one child in the movie? It seems that David as an adult chose to affirm his Jewish heritage, and did not wish to involve himself with Lewis interests. Douglas became a Christian, and does fully support Lewis related matters, including the play and movie. Again, legal consideration affected the realistic telling of the story. Douglas, the boy, is shown reading *The Hobbit* while the mother is in the hospital.

I kept seeing the actors Hopkins and Winger and could never quite suspend disbelief that I was watching Jack and Joy. Both may be very good actors, but neither comes close to what the real people were like. Lewis, for example, was much more robust and booming than the drawing room polite Hopkins. "Based" on a true story greatly stretches the meaning of the word. As glad as I was to see a film about Lewis, and despite some scenes being accurate in dialog, no one should think they are learning an accurate presentation of what really happened. The true story is much more fascinating and moving.

For those desiring a much more accurate presentation of the facts, I highly recommend reading:

Lenten Lands: My Childhood with Joy Davidman and C.S. Lewis by Douglas H. Gresham New York: Macmillian, 1988.

And God Came In: The Extraordinary Story of Joy Davidman — Her life and Marriage to C.S. Lewis by Lyle W. Dorsett. New York: Macmillian, 1983.

— *Glen GoodKnight*